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THE MOSLEM PROBLEM AND PERIL:

FACTS AND FIGURES FOR LAYMEN

By

S. M. ZWEMER, F. R. G. S.

Missionary in Arabia, 1890-1905

LAYMEN'S MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

1 Madison Avenue
New York City

"ISLAM—the mightiest system of monotheism the world has ever known, 'shadowing with wings' the three continents of Asia and Africa, having, in its progress, stamped out of existence tens of thousands of Christian churches and riveted upon 200,000-000 of men its doctrines, polity, ceremonial, and code of laws, and imbedded itself in the Arabic language like the nummulite fossils in the ledges of Jebel Mokattam, until it stands to-day like a towering mountain range whose summits are gilded with the light of the great truths of God's existence and unity, and whose foothills run down into the sloughs of polygamy and oppression and degradation of women."

H. H. JESSUP, D.D.,

A veteran Missionary in Syria.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The following facts and figures, giving a general view of one of the largest and most difficult of present-day missionary problems, were compiled and condensed from the author's "Islam, A Challenge to Faith." For a fuller account of the Mohammedan religion and the present needs and opportunities of the Mohammedon world from the standpoint of Christian missions, the reader is referred to that volume.

S. M. Z.

THE MOSLEM PROBLEM AND PERIL:

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A WORLD-WIDE RELIGION.—The great religions of the world may be divided into two classes—the non-missionary and the missionary. Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, for example, are non-missionary, while Buddhism, Christianity and Islam *are* missionary. Islam was such from its very origin. Although not in the Christian conception of the word “missionary,” yet in zeal for propagating their faith, in world-wide missionary enterprise and activity, whether by fire and sword or by word of preaching, Islam affords a striking example of how the rank and file in the Moslem army were missionaries of the faith.

One hundred years after Mohammed's death his followers were masters of an empire greater than Rome at the zenith of her power. They were building mosques in China, in Spain, in Persia and in Southern India!

If we regard numbers, Islam to-day is perhaps the mightiest of all the non-Christian religions; and as regards its geographical distribution, it is the only religion besides Christianity which holds a world-empire of hearts in its grasp. Mohammed's word has been fulfilled: “So we have made you the centre of the nations, that you should bear witness to men.” The old pagan pantheon at Mecca has become the religious capital and the centre of universal pilgrimage for one-seventh of the human race. Islam in its present extent embraces three continents and counts its believers from Sierra Leone, in Africa, to Canton, in China, and from Tobolsk, Siberia, to Singapore and Java. In Russia Moslems spread their prayer-carpets southward toward Mecca; at Zanzibar they

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look northward to the Holy City ; in Khansu and Shensi, millions of Chinese Moslems pray toward the west, and in the wide Soudan they look eastward toward the Beit Allah and the Black Stone—a vast Moslem brotherhood.

Arabic is the language of the Koran, but there are millions of Moslems who cannot understand a single sentence of Mohammed's book, for they speak a dozen other languages. On the streets of Mecca one may see drawn together by a common faith the Turkish Effendi in Paris costume, with Constantinople etiquette; the half-naked Bedouin of the desert; the fierce Afghan mountaineer: the Russian trader from the far north; the almond-eyed Moslem from Yunnan; the Indian graduate from the Calcutta universities; Persians, Somalis, Hausas, Javanese, Soudanese, Egyptians, Berbers, Kabyles and Moors. Mecca at the time of the annual pilgrimage has a pilgrim population of about seventy thousand, and among them are representatives of every nation under heaven—the largest annual religious gathering in the world.

A careful estimate of the total Moslem population of the world leads to the belief that there are between two hundred and two hundred and thirty millions who are nominally Mohammedans.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.—To begin with Africa, where Islam has covered the largest area in its conquest and missionary propaganda, the stronghold of Mohammedanism lies along the Mediterranean. North of twenty degrees latitude the Moslems constitute ninety-one per cent. of the total population. Thirty-six per cent. of Africa's entire population is Mohammedan, or nearly fifty-nine million souls out of the whole number, one hundred and sixty-four million. South of the equator there are

already over four million Mohammedans. Dr. W. R. Miller, for some years a missionary in West Africa, states that "the number of Moslems is undoubtedly increasing rapidly. Islam and Christianity between them are spoiling heathenism and will probably divide the pagan peoples in less than fifty years."

In addition to Africa with its millions, there are about one hundred and sixty-nine million Moslems in Asia and about five millions in Europe. Generally speaking, one-seventh of the total population of Asia, and of the world, is Mohammedan. The following countries in Asia are predominantly and some almost wholly Moslem: Arabia, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Turkestan, Bokhara, Khiva, Persia, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Java, Sumatra, Celebes and the Southern Islands of the Philippine group. *The chief numerical strength of the Mohammedan Faith, however, is in India, which has a larger Moslem population than all Africa and far more than the total population of Arabia, Persia, Egypt and the Turkish Empire combined.* By the last census the number of Moslems in India is 62,458,077.

In the Dutch East Indies there are nearly thirty million Moslems out of a total population of thirty-six millions. The number of Moslems in China is variously given from twenty to thirty millions. In the Philippines, under the American flag, there are about 300,000 Moslems. The total number of Moslems in the Russian Empire, chiefly in Asia, is given in the "Statesman's Year Book" as 13,906,972, which equals 9.47 per cent. of the total population, while the Russian Jews number only 3.55 per cent.

POLITICAL DIVISIONS.—The present political division of the Mohammedan world is a startling evidence of the finger of God in history and an unprecedented

missionary challenge to the churches of Christendom. Once Moslem empire was co-extensive with Moslem faith. In 907 A. D. the Caliphate of political power included Spain, Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, Arabia, Persia, Turkestan, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and the region around the Caspian Sea. To-day the empire of Mahomet V., Caliph of all believers, has shrunk to such small proportions that it includes less than sixteen million Moslems and covers only Turkey, Asia Minor, Tripoli and one-fifth of Arabia.

WHAT MOSLEMS BELIEVE.—It is incumbent on all Moslems to have a firm faith in God, His Angels, His Books, His Prophets, the Day of Judgment, and Predestination of Good and Evil. Moslems believe in God's unity, omnipotence and mercy. The Koran shows that Mohammed had a measurably correct idea of some of the attributes of God, but an absolutely false conception of His moral nature and holiness. The conception of God is negative. The Christian truth, that "God is love," is to the learned Moslem blasphemy and to the ignorant an enigma. "Mohammed teaches a God above us; Moses teaches a God above us, and yet with us; Jesus Christ teaches God above us, God with us, and God in us."

The Moslems also assert their belief in angels, jinn and devils. This belief is not theoretical, but is intensely practical, and touches everyday life at many points. Jinn, or genii, are either good or evil. They were created from fire, are of diverse shapes, marry and propagate, and are mortal. The Koran is full of teachings about their origin, office, power and destiny. One needs only to read the "Arabian Nights" to get an idea of the effect of this belief

on life and morals. No pious Moslem to-day doubts that they exist, nor that Solomon sealed some of them up in brass bottles! For fear of jinn millions of the ignorant in Moslem lands are, all their lifetime, subject to bondage. This article of their creed is the mother of a thousand foolish and degrading superstitions.

Islam is decidedly a bookish religion, for Moslems believe that God "sent down" many sacred books. Their doctrine of inspiration is mechanical. The four chief books are the Torah (Law) which came to Moses; the Zabur (Psalms) which David received; the Injil (Gospel) of Jesus, and the Koran. The Koran is uncreated and eternal. And while the three other books are highly spoken of in the Koran, they now exist, Moslems say, only in a corrupted form, and their precepts have been abrogated by the final book to the last prophet, Mohammed.

THE KORAN.—This book is considered by Moslems the great standing miracle of their prophet, and it is a remarkable production. It is a little smaller than the New Testament in bulk, and has one hundred and fourteen chapters, bearing fanciful titles borrowed from some word or phrase in the chapter, *e. g.*, the Cow, the Bee, Women, Spoils, the Ant, the Spider, Smoke, the Pen, etc. The book has no chronological order, logical sequence, or rhetorical climax. Its jumbled verses throw together piecemeal, fact and fancy, laws and legends, prayers and imprecations. It is unintelligible without a commentary, even for a Moslem. Moslems regard it as supreme in beauty of style and language, and miraculous in its origin, contents and authority. The first chapter and the so-called verse of the "Throne" are striking examples of some of its beauties:

THE OPENING CHAPTER.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!

The Compassionate, the Merciful!

King of the Day of Judgment!

Thee do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help!

Guide Thou us on the right path!

The path of those to whom Thou art gracious!

Not of those with whom Thou art angered, nor of those who go astray."

THE VERSE OF THE THRONE.

"God! there is no God but He; the living, the Eternal!

Slumber doth not overtake Him, neither sleep.

To Him belongeth whatever is in heaven and on the earth.

Who shall intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is between their hands and behind them;

And they can not encompass aught of His knowledge except as He please. His throne is as wide as the heavens and the earth.

The preservation of both is no weariness unto Him.

He is, the high, the mighty."

But the defects of its teachings are many: (a) It is full of historical errors; (b) it contains monstrous fables; (c) it teaches a false cosmogony; (d) it is full of superstitions; (e) it perpetuates slavery, polygamy, divorce, religious intolerance, the seclusion and

degradation of women ; (f) it petrifies social life; (g) and offers no doctrine of redemption from sin or atonement by sacrifice.

Mohammed was not only the Prophet but the *prophecy* of Islam. His life has become the ideal of conduct and the standard of character for all the millions of the Moslem world. What that life was can be learned from his biography and although he was doubtless a great leader and a man of genius his home life and his character as a religious teacher are such as to be entirely unworthy of imitation. According to Moslem belief, however, the very faults of his character become his endless glory and the signs of his superiority, *e. g.*, his practice of polygamy and cruel wars are interpreted as special privileges. He dwells in the highest heaven and is several degrees above Jesus, our Saviour, in honor and station. His name is never uttered or written without the addition of a prayer. Yet, a calm and critical study of his life proves him to have been an ambitious and sensual enthusiast, who did not scruple to break nearly every precept of the moral law to further his own ends.

WHAT MOSLEMS BELIEVE CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST.—A Christian studying the faith of Islam soon learns not only that Christ has no place in the Moslem idea of God, as they deny the Trinity, but that the portrait of our Saviour, as given in the Koran and in tradition, is a sad caricature. According to Moslem teaching, Jesus was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary; He spoke while still a babe in the cradle; performed many puerile miracles in His youth; healed the sick and raised the dead when He reached manhood. He was specially commissioned to confirm the Law and reveal the Gospel. He was strengthened by the Holy Spirit (Gabriel). He foretold another

prophet, whose name should be Ahmed (Mohammed). They believe that Jesus was, by deception and substitution, saved from crucifixion and taken to heaven, and that He is now in one of the inferior stages of celestial bliss; that He will come again at the last day, slay anti-Christ, kill all the swine, break the Cross, and remove the poll-tax from infidels. He will reign as a Just King for forty-five years, marry and leave children, then die and be buried near Mohammed at Medina. The place of His future grave is already marked out between the graves of Omar and Fatimah.

HEAVEN AND HELL.—Moslems believe in an everlasting life of physical joys, or physical tortures. The Moslem paradise, in the words of the Koran, is a "Garden of delight . . . with couches and ewers, and a cup of flowing wine; their brows ache not from it, nor fails the sense; theirs shall be the Houris . . . ever virgins." What commentators say on these texts is often unfit for translation. The orthodox interpretation is literal, and so was that of Mohammed, because the traditions give minute particulars of the sanitary laws of heaven, as well as of its sexual delights. "The believer in Paradise will marry five hundred houris, four thousand virgins and eight thousand divorced women."

The Moslem hell is sevenfold, and "each portal has its party." All the wealth of Arabic vocabulary is exhausted in describing the terrors of the lost, and Dante's "Inferno" is a summer-garden compared with the Jehennom of Islam. It is terribly hot, its fuel are men and stones, its drink liquid pus, the clothes of the inhabitants burning pitch, while serpents and scorpions sting their victims.

PREDESTINATION.—This last article is the key-stone in the arch of the Moslem faith. It is the only philosophy of Islam, and the most fertile article of the creed in its effects on everyday life. Most Moslem sects “deny all free-agency in man, and say that man is necessarily constrained by the force of God’s eternal and immutable decree to act as he does!” God wills both good and evil; there is no escaping from the caprice of His decree. Religion is Islam, *i. e.*, resignation. Fatalism has paralyzed progress. Hope perishes under the weight of this iron bondage; injustice and social decay are stoically accepted; no man bears the burden of another. Omar Khayyam voices the sentiment of millions when he writes:

“Tis all a chequer-board of nights and days
Where Destiny with men for pieces plays;
Hither and thither moves and mates and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.”

THE RELIGION OF GOOD WORKS.—While everyone who confesses the faith of Islam is a Moslem or true believer, yet it is incumbent on all who believe to show their faith by outward observance of the religious duties of Islam. The five duties are called “the pillars,” or foundation, of religion. Their pious observance is the mark of a true Moslem; to break loose from any one of them is to be in peril of damnation. Mohammed said: “A Moslem is one who is resigned and obedient to God’s will, and (1) *bears witness* that there is no God but God, and that Mohammed is His Apostle; and (2) is steadfast in *prayer*; and (3) gives *zakat* (legal alms); and (4) *fasts* in the month of Ramazan; and (5) makes a *pilgrimage* to Mecca, if he have the means.”

But alas, these five pillars of the Mohammedan faith are all broken reeds by the solemn test of age-

long experience, because their creed is only a half-truth, and its "pure monotheism" does not satisfy the soul's need of a mediator and an atonement for sin. Their prayers are formal and vain repetitions, without demanding or producing holiness in the one that uses them. Their fasting is productive of two distinct evils wherever observed; it manufactures an unlimited number of hypocrites who profess to keep the fast and do not do so, and, in the second place, the reaction which occurs at sunset of every night of Ramazan tends to produce revelling and dissipation of the lowest and most degrading type. Their almsgiving stimulates indolence and has produced that acme of social parasites—the dervish or fakir. Finally their pilgrimages to Mecca, Medina and Kerbela are a public scandal even to Moslem morality, so that the Holy cities are hotbeds of vice and plague-spots in the body politic.

SOCIAL CONDITION OF MOSLEM LANDS.—The present general social and moral condition of Mohammedan lands and of Moslems in all lands is not such as it is in spite of, but because of their religion. The law of cause and effect has operated for over a thousand years under every possible natural and political environment, among Semites, Negroes, Aryan races and Slavs. *The results are so sadly similar that they form a terrible and unanswerable indictment of the social and moral weakness of Islam.* There is no better proof of the inadequacy of the religion of Mohammed than a study of the present intellectual, social and moral condition of Arabia. Cradled at Mecca, fostered at Medina, and reformed in the Nejd, Islam has had undisputed possession of the entire peninsula for almost thirteen centuries. In other lands, such as Syria and Egypt, it remained in

contact with a more or less corrupt form of Christianity, or, as in India and in China, in conflict with cultured heathenism, and there is no doubt that in both cases there were and are mutual concessions and influences. But in its native Arabian soil the tree planted by the Prophet has grown with wild freedom and brought forth fruit after its kind. As regards morality, Arabia is on a low plane. Slavery and concubinage exist everywhere; while polygamy and divorce are fearfully common. Fatalism, the philosophy of the masses, has paralyzed progress and injustice is stoically accepted. Bribery is too common to be a crime, lying is a fine art and robbery has been reduced to a science. And Arabia is only typical of other Moslem lands. Social and moral conditions are no better in Persia, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Tripoli or Morocco. The holy cities of Persia are hot-beds of immorality. Polygamy and divorce are common. Marriage often takes place when the girl is seven or nine years of age, in accordance with Mohammed's example in the case of Ayesha. The low moral condition of Baluchistan and Afghanistan is indescribable. Girls there are put up at auction and sold to the highest bidder, while compensation for blood is often ordered paid in yet unborn female children.

Polygamy has not diminished licentiousness in any Moslem land, but everywhere increased it. "Immorality among African Mohammedans is commonly indescribable. It is worse among the Arabs of the intensely Mohammedan countries to the north than it is among the Negro races to the south."

ILLITERACY.—The illiteracy of the Mohammedan world to-day is as surprising as it is appalling. One would think that a religion which almost worships its Sacred Book, and which was once mistress of science

and literature, would in its onward sweep have enlightened the nations. But facts are stubborn things. Careful investigations show that seventy-five to one hundred per cent. of the Moslems in Africa are unable to read or write. In Tripoli ninety per cent. are illiterate; in Egypt, eighty-eight per cent.; in Algiers, over ninety per cent. In Turkey conditions have greatly improved and illiteracy is not above forty per cent. while of women it is estimated as under sixty per cent. But the most surprising, and at the same time the most accurate, statistics of illiteracy are those of India. *According to the last census, the total of illiteracy among the 62,458,077 Mohammedans of India is the enormous figure of 59,674,499, or about ninety-six per cent!* The Moslem world is in the darkness of ignorance and superstition and spiritual bondage. It is a world without Christ, and therefore without hope.

A NEGLECTED PROBLEM.—Islam dates from the year 622 A. D.; but the first missionary to the Mohammedans in the annals of the Christian Church was Raymund Lull, who was dragged outside the town of Bugia and stoned to death on June 30, 1315. Before the time of Lull there was little organized missionary effort in the Church, East or West, to preach Christ to the Moslem nations. And, as far as we know, Lull had no successors, with his spirit, until Henry Martyn's day. Had the spirit of Raymond Lull filled the Church throughout those long centuries of neglect, we would not now speak of more than two hundred million unevangelized Moslems. A brighter day has dawned. Doors are wide open that once were closed with bars of iron.

"The time has come," says Rev. James S. Dennis, D. D., "for the Church of Christ seriously to consider

her duty to this large fraction of our race. It is not to be supposed that a church guided and inspired by an Almighty Leader will neglect a duty simply because it is difficult and calls for faith and fortitude. It is especially foreign to the spirit of American Christianity to slight a task because it is hard, or ignore a question of moral reform or religious responsibility because it looks formidable." The task is not hopeless.

SOME RESULTS OF MISSIONS TO MOSLEMS.—The results of missionary effort for Moslems, or in Moslem lands, have been both direct and indirect. The latter have been far greater than the former and have in God's providence prepared the way for the final victory.

The preliminary work has largely been accomplished. In the first place it is a remarkable fact that when we study the map of the Mohammedan world we see nearly every strategic Moslem centre already occupied by Protestant missions.

Another result is that the Bible has been translated into nearly every language spoken by Moslems. Thousands of portions of Scriptures are already in use by Moslems and tens of thousands of copies are being sold to them every year by colporteurs and missionaries. The Beirut Press alone has issued over a million volumes of the Arabic Scriptures since it was founded.

And there have been conversions. "The accessions from Islam," says Dr. Wherry, "especially in Northern India, have been continuous during all the years since the death of Henry Martyn. One here and another there has been added to the Christian Church, so that now, as one looks over the rolls of church membership, he is surprised to find so many converts from Islam, or the children and children's children of such converts."

In Sumatra the Rhenish mission has 6,500 converted Moslems, 1,150 catechumens, 80 churches, 5 pastors and 70 lay preachers, while they baptized 153 adult Mohammedans in a single year. In the district of Si Perok a Christian convert from Islam has become chief in place of a Mohammedan.

In Java there have been still greater numerical results. According to latest statistics there are now living in Java eighteen thousand who have been converted from Islam to Christianity, and the converts from Islam amount to between three hundred and four hundred adults every year. In Bokhara and the Caucasus, where work has only just begun, a number of Moslems have been converted and baptized. The testimony of a Moslem professor in the high school in Bokhara, now a convert, may well close this brief summary of results. Coming from the heart of Asia *"I am convinced that Jesus Christ will conquer Mohammed. There is no doubt about it, because Christ is King in Heaven and on earth, and his Kingdom fills heaven now, and will soon fill the earth."*

A CHALLENGE TO LAYMEN.—The history of the wonderful spread of Islam until it became a world-religion is not without significance for us to-day. In spite of cruelty, bloodshed, dissension and deceit, the story of the Moslem conquest is full of heroism. If so much was done in the name and after the example of Mohammed, what should we not do in the name of Jesus Christ and in obedience to His marching orders? A careful study of these early Moslem conquests impresses one with the fact that some measure of their success was due to their enthusiasm and fanatic faith, as well as to the character of their creed and the mere power of the sword. The preaching of Islam was earnest, and demanded as

unconditional a surrender as did their weapons. The thunder of their cavalry was not more terrible to the enemy than the clamor of their short, sharp creed in the ears of an idolatrous and divided Christendom, or the ears of ignorant pagans: "*La-ilaha illa Allah! Allahu Akbar!*" These men of the desert carried everything before them, because they had the backbone of conviction, knew no compromise, and were thirsting for world-conquest. Not Khalid alone, but every Moslem warrior felt himself to be the "Sword of God."

Nor did they shrink from hardship, danger or death itself, in this holy war for their faith. Had not Mohammed said: "The fire of hell shall not touch the legs of him who is covered with the dust of battle in the road of God?" And was not Paradise itself under the shadow of the spears of the thickest fight?

To the modern Christian world, missions imply organization, societies, paid agents, subscriptions, reports, etc. All this is practically absent from the present Moslem idea of propagation, and yet the spread of Islam goes on. With loss of political power, the zeal of Islam seems to increase, for Egypt and India are more active in propagating the faith than are Turkey or Morocco.

In Burma (where Indian merchants are the Moslem missionaries) the Moslem population increased thirty-three per cent. in the past decade. In the Western Soudan and on the Niger whole districts once pagan are now Mohammedan, and this has been, to a large extent, the work of lay missionaries—merchants, travelers and artisans. It would be an exaggeration to say that every Moslem is a missionary, but it is true that, with the exception of the Dervish orders (who resemble monks) the missionaries of

Islam are the laymen in every walk of life, rather than its priesthood. *Their* Laymen's Missionary Movement is thirteen centuries old! On the streets of Lahore and Calcutta you may see clerks, traders, bookbinders, and even coolies, who spend part of their leisure time preaching Islam or attacking Christianity by argument.

The merchants who go to Mecca as pilgrims from Java return to do missionary work among the hill-tribes. In the Soudan the Hausa merchants carry the Koran and the catechism wherever they carry their merchandise. No sooner do they open a wayside shop in some pagan district than the wayside mosque is built by its side. And is it not a remarkable proof of the earnestness even of the Arab slave-dealers, that, in spite of the horrors of the traffic, the very slave-routes became highways for Islam, and the negroes adopted the religion of Mohammed, to escape the very curse which brought it to them?

The laity in Islam are, in one sense, all preachers. The shop-keeper and the camel-driver are ashamed neither of their proud creed nor of their prophet and his book. They proclaim the creed from the housetop, they never utter Mohammed's name without a prayer, and they carry the Koran everywhere, although eighty per cent. of the Moslem world is illiterate. If they cannot read it, they can, at least, kiss it or wear it as an amulet! All ranks of society are propagandists. By such incessant, spontaneous and almost fanatic parading, preaching, pushing of their faith by the mass of believers, and not solely by the power of the sword, Islam grew to its gigantic proportions. And if they used a sword, so also can we. "The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit to the joints and

marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." THAT blade we can all wield. It is a better sword than theirs, and slays to give Life Eternal.

If they did so much with theirs, surely we can do more with ours. We can do it, if we will. We have a better message, a more glorious faith, a higher motive, a richer reward, a more certain victory, a nobler inspiration, a better comradeship, and a Leader before Whose great white throne and great white life the mock majesty and the whitewashed immorality of Mohammed shrink in abject terror. THEY did it for Mohammed. Shall we not do it for our Saviour in the spread of Christianity? And do it *now*, before it is too late?

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